THE

OPPOSITION.

To be publiſhed occaſionally.

——— *Contra audentior ito.*

VIRG.

LONDON:

Sold by M. COOPER, in *Pater-noſter-row.* 1755.

[Price Four Pence.]

Harvard College Library
Sept. 18 1923
Minot fund

THE OPPOSITION.

To be publiſhed occaſionally.

——— *Contra audentior ito.*

VIRG.

IF there ever was any one governing Principle in the Affairs of this great Univerſe, I think, we may pronounce, it is the Spirit of Oppoſition. The Aſtronomer has found it in the ſtronger Influences of the heavenly Bodies; the Philoſopher acknowledges it in all his elemental Syſtems. Scholars find it among the Arts and Sciences; the Painter calls it Contraſte, the Poet Antitheſis, and the

A Churchman

Churchman Infidelity. The Moraliſt ranks it among the Virtues by the Name of Emulation; and with Heroes, the Motto of this Paper is the very Motto of Heroiſm.

BUT in the World of Politics its Influence is univerſal. It actuates the whole Syſtem, and through all its Parts. For Inſtance, what do we mean by the Balance of Power in Europe, but a nice Oppoſition of all its political Intereſts? An Oppoſition wiſely maintained by Queen ELISABETH; betrayed by the Puſillanimity of her Succeſſor; ill exchanged by the firſt CHARLES for an unhappy one with his People; laviſhed away by his Son upon his Miſtreſſes and Favourites; ſacrificed by CROMWELL to the Vanity of inſulting Spain; fooled away by JAMES to the Nonſenſe of his Religion; recovered by the Revolution, and fixed, for the Period of a few Years, by Queen ANNE.

BUT this Principle, ſo powerful upon the Intereſts of Europe in general, what Influence has it on particular States? For Inſtance,

Inſtance, upon the Happineſs and Proſperity of Great Britain? We Anſwer, That to the well-balanced Oppoſition of her three Eſtates, ſhe owes the very Being of her Conſtitution; her Freedom at home, her Weight and Influence abroad, to which in ſome meaſure Europe owes its Independence. Even to that Oppoſition between the Leaders of Parties within our Government, we are indebted for a Spirit of Jealouſy, which is ever watchful over the Conduct of our Adminiſtration, either to prevent its Errors, or, if committed, to correct them. This kind of Oppoſition, by whatever Motives inſpired, is the alone Foundation upon which a great Empire can be raiſed. This alone gives Laws and Statutes for the Preſervation of domeſtic Liberty; this alone gives Strength and Spirit for foreign Conqueſts.

SUCH is the Language of Machiavel *, when he treats of the Diſſenſions in the Roman Republic between her Patricians and

* Third and fourth Chapters of his firſt Book.

Plebeians. He aſſerts; he proves, with his own peculiar Force of Reaſoning, that whoever could have taken this Spirit of Oppoſition out of her Conſtitution, would have taken away all Poſſibility of her future Greatneſs; that, under any other Form of Government, ſhe muſt have been contented with her own little Territories, or having ambitiouſly attempted to extend them, muſt have been ruined, like Venice or Sparta, by the Loſs of a ſingle Battle. In proof of this Reaſoning, let us recollect, that whenever her Neighbours deſigned to take Advantage of her domeſtic Quarrels, they always found her ſtronger in proportion to the Violence of thoſe Quarrels. Conqueſt abroad was the certain Effect of her Diſſenſions at home.

ASSUREDLY, there cannot in a free State be a more threatening Symptom of approaching Diſſolution, than a languid Union of political Sentiments among her Citizens. Liberty is in its own Nature ardent and active; ſo fond of Oppoſition, that when there are neither any real Dangers, or imaginary Oppreſſions to oppoſe, it amuſes

and keeps alive its natural Diſpoſition, by every other kind of Diſſenſion. The Theatre and Opera; their Singers, Dancers, Fidlers, and Harlequins, call forth her native Spirit; and while theſe unimportant Diſputes maintain our Critics in their theatrical Rights, they evince the Certainty of our national Liberty. In the French Theatres, a Mouſquetaire quells all this gallant Spirit, by a Whiſper, or a Tap on the Shoulder.

In this kind of Reaſoning, I have often, not without Wonder, heard our Members of P— open their Speeches, with wiſhing for the unanimous Conſent of the Houſe to the Bill they propoſed; and for this Reaſon, that all Europe might be convinced how united they were in their Reſolutions. But if Europe be well acquainted with our Conſtitution, or can judge of the Principles upon which the Liberty and Greatneſs of a free State are founded, what muſt they really think of ſuch an Union? If France will believe her *Monteſquieu*, ſhe will believe, that the Spirit which hath for Ages animated

mated Great Britain to preſerve her own Freedom, and to vindicate that of others, is loſt in Cowardice, Indolence, or Deſpair; ſhe will believe, that Corruption or Tyranny have impreſſed ſuch an Union of Sentiments upon our Politics, as Ignorance or Perſecution only can ever eſtabliſh in our Religion.

LET the French, therefore, at this very critical Conjuncture, be well informed, that we have a Party in our H——e of C——s, determined to oppoſe the Adminiſtration: A Party, not inconſiderable in their Numbers, nor lightly eſteemed for their Abilities; of Sagacity to detect the Errors of the Miniſter, and of Power to awe him from executing any Project for betraying the Intereſts, or violating the Liberty of his Country; of Eloquence to plead her Cauſe, and Courage to defend it. Let this be reported to the French, and let us wiſh they may believe it. Yet, to confeſs my own Apprehenſions, I greatly fear the Account will not prove ſo ſtrictly true as Britain, either in Intereſt or Honour, might deſire.

WHEN

WHEN I reflect, that a political Oppoſition is a principal Fountain of Oratory; when I remember the flouriſhing State of Eloquence during Sir *Robert Walpole*'s Adminiſtration, I can hardly account for that Feebleneſs of Spirit with which our preſent Patriot forms his Oppoſition to the Meaſures of the Court. All the *technical Terms* of Bribery and Corruption, Subſidies, National Debts, Places, Penſions, and Standing Armies, are ſtill remaining in our Language. Have they loſt their original Meaning? or are they fairly worn out, (the common Fate of other Words), by being uſed upon every too light and trivial Occaſion? Or have they loſt their Importance and Dignity, by being proſtituted to ſerve the bad Purpoſes of perſonal Reſentment, Envy, or Ambition? Why does our Orator in vain pronounce them with his uſual declamatory Tone? Why is the ſolemn Aſſeveration no longer believed? why the Vehemence of his Action no longer alarming? The Preſſure of the oratorial Hand upon the Breaſt—why hath it loſt its Pathetic? Why are the Swellings of his Periods grown languid, his Figures

Figures inanimate, and his Paſſions lifeleſs? Why is all this? Becauſe he hath departed from that Plan of Oppoſition to which he was indebted for his Importance. We have heard him defend that very Adminiſtration he had for Years oppoſed. We have heard the Han——n Troops maintained by that very ſame Eloquence, which had lately branded them with Cowardice. We know he ſupported that Train of Meaſures for a Length of Years, which have rendered this Country what it is now called, if juſtly called, *poor, miſerable, forlorn, and betrayed.* It is confeſſed he did not often ſpeak in Defence of theſe Meaſures; but the cool, ſilent Approbation of his continuing in Employment, during this deſtroying, betraying Adminiſtration, was a ſtronger Argument in favour of it, than any that ever flowed from his own Torrent of talking. The Violence of Debate inflames us; the Exertion of our own Abilities impoſes upon our Judgment, by influencing our Vanity; we are inſenſibly actuated by the Spirit of Oppoſition; we reaſon and argue ourſelves into Error. But the calm and ſilent Thinker, the undiſturbed,

turbed, uncontradicting Spectator, gives indiſputable Proof of his Approbation. Such Silence (I write not to little Critics) ſpeaks more forcibly than the ſtrongeſt Expreſſions of Eloquence.

But, perhaps, it is not decently to be imagined, that any Gentleman could give this moſt undoubted Proof of his concurring in Meaſures, which he was conſcious ruined and betrayed his Country. "He "was excluded from the Councils of the "Adminiſtration: He was ignorant at that "Time of their Deſigns." His Ignorance is no Excuſe. He ſhould not have been ignorant. May we preſume to ſay, that in his Situation it is hardly conceivable he could have been totally ignorant? A general Suſpicion, we are told, of timid and feeble Meaſures was abroad. Was not this ſufficient Matter of Alarm; of Doubt, and conſequently of Inquiry? To doubt, was to be reſolved. Or indeed could ſuch Sagacity have been long impoſed on? If not, will it be a Compliment to his Integrity, that he held his Employment under ſuch an Adminiſtration; that he gave the Authority and

Honour of his Name to Meaſures ruinous and betraying? What ſhould we think of an Officer, who at any Diſtance apprehenſive that a Conſpiracy was forming againſt the Life of his Sovereign, ſhould continue in his Service, receive his Pay, and take the uſual Oaths of Loyalty, yet neglect to inform him of his Danger, becauſe he did not mount Guard upon his Perſon? And will it now be Matter of Wonder, that ſuch an Oppoſition is no longer attended with the clamorous Applauſe of *Hear him, hear him?* Surely no. For not the vehement Repetition of Words, that ought to be eſteemed ſacred, can long convince us of that Man's Integrity, whoſe Life is an Evidence upon Record againſt his preſent Declamation.

But from frequent Examples of this kind, we may be moſt apprehenſive, that the Oppoſition for which we contend, and which we hope will for ever maintain its due Influence in our Councils, may become odious or contemptible. It is confeſſed, that diſappointed Ambition, a fancied Superiority of Parts, a ſanguine Spirit of pronouncing, that all who differ from us in Opinion,

want

want common Senſe and common Virtue—it is confeſſed, that theſe, and the Paſſions in general, are very good Speakers, though certainly very bad Reaſoners. But when they can ſo far indulge their natural Impetuoſity, as to ſtop the Buſineſs of the Nation in a moſt important Debate, at a Seaſon moſt critical, for the ſake of gratifying their perſonal Reſentments, what Regard can they be ſuppoſed to have for its Welfare and Honour? What Conſequences may we not with Reaſon dread, if ever the Conduct of our Affairs be committed to their Intemperance? One Conſequence we may juſtly dread, more dangerous to the Conſtitution, to the very Being of Parliaments, than all the ſuſpected Arts of Bribery and Corruption; than all the undue Influence of Places and Penſions. The People may with juſt Indignation behold themſelves the Property of a laboured Declamation; and when they are convinced, that public Virtue, Love of Country, and a Zeal for the Liberties of Europe, are a kind of Figures of Rhetoric, uſed only to deceive or amuſe; that their Underſtandings are inſulted by the little Arts of ſomewhat like Eloquence; that their

Honour of his Name to Meaſures ruinous and betraying? What ſhould we think of an Officer, who at any Diſtance apprehenſive that a Conſpiracy was forming againſt the Life of his Sovereign, ſhould continue in his Service, receive his Pay, and take the uſual Oaths of Loyalty, yet neglect to inform him of his Danger, becauſe he did not mount Guard upon his Perſon? And will it now be Matter of Wonder, that ſuch an Oppoſition is no longer attended with the clamorous Applauſe of *Hear him, hear him?* Surely no. For not the vehement Repetition of Words, that ought to be eſteemed ſacred, can long convince us of that Man's Integrity, whoſe Life is an Evidence upon Record againſt his preſent Declamation.

But from frequent Examples of this kind, we may be moſt apprehenſive, that the Oppoſition for which we contend, and which we hope will for ever maintain its due Influence in our Councils, may become odious or contemptible. It is confeſſed, that diſappointed Ambition, a fancied Superiority of Parts, a ſanguine Spirit of pronouncing, that all who differ from us in Opinion,

want

want common Senſe and common Virtue—it is confeſſed, that theſe, and the Paſſions in general, are very good Speakers, though certainly very bad Reaſoners. But when they can ſo far indulge their natural Impetuoſity, as to ſtop the Buſineſs of the Nation in a moſt important Debate, at a Seaſon moſt critical, for the ſake of gratifying their perſonal Reſentments, what Regard can they be ſuppoſed to have for its Welfare and Honour? What Conſequences may we not with Reaſon dread, if ever the Conduct of our Affairs be committed to their Intemperance? One Conſequence we may juſtly dread, more dangerous to the Conſtitution, to the very Being of Parliaments, than all the ſuſpected Arts of Bribery and Corruption; than all the undue Influence of Places and Penſions. The People may with juſt Indignation behold themſelves the Property of a laboured Declamation; and when they are convinced, that public Virtue, Love of Country, and a Zeal for the Liberties of Europe, are a kind of Figures of Rhetoric, uſed only to deceive or amuſe; that their Underſtandings are inſulted by the little Arts of ſomewhat like Eloquence; that their

Lives and Fortunes are deemed a Prize of Oratory to be declaimed for by their Repreſentatives; may they not riſe in their Reſentment, to puniſh the Inſolence and Treachery of their pretended Protectors? Their Rage may perhaps be cruel, but even their Cruelty will be acknowledged only an Extreme of Juſtice.

But Eloquence is really not of abſolute Neceſſity to be required in our Repreſentatives, at leaſt for any other Purpoſes than thoſe peculiarly their own. A firm, unſhaken Integrity; an unblemiſhed Reputation; a Reverence for the Conſtitution; and a ſincere, unſuſpected, unprofeſſing Zeal for his Majesty; are not theſe infinitely more valuable than all the Powers of Eloquence, if indeed our Language, and our Education, be capable of any thing that may deſerve that Name? But I fear we a little miſtake in our modern Ideas of Eloquence. It does not, I hope, conſiſt in a Spirit of Obloquy, which in private Converſation would be reſented as Outrage and Affront. It does not conſiſt in a Torrent of perſonal Invectives, though uttered with a Pomp of Language,

guage, and enlivened with all the Figures of Rhetoric; yet as little to be compared to the Torrents in Demoſthenes or Cicero, as Swift's City-ſhower to the Torrent in Virgil, of which it is a burleſque Imitation. It does not conſiſt in a Knack of eluding the Force of an Argument we are unable to anſwer, or of inſinuating an Untruth, which for Fear of Detection we muſt not venture openly to aſſert. It does not conſiſt in a trivial Happineſs of making *a Quantity of barren Spectators laugh*; *a pitiful Ambition*, ſays *Hamlet*, *in him who uſes it*; and who ſhould be a little apprehenſive, how difficult it is, how almoſt impoſſible, to make others laugh, and yet preſerve himſelf from being ridiculous. It does not conſiſt in the Oratory of an itinerant Phyſician, who calls our legal Practitioners a Parcel of Knaves and Fools, and aſſures us they know nothing of our Conſtitution. Such an Orator, though he may be clothed, like Homer's Hero, in Braſs, and hardened with a Styx-like Invulnerability of Complexion, (the Reader will pardon a new Word, when the Idea is totally new); though he may have indeed ſome Likeneſs to that tremendous Character,

Impiger,

Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer; yet has he really a Right to talk the Language of Homer's Achilles? Heroes, we acknowledge, are above all Laws. But *He is not yet* an Hero; *perhaps—by and by—and yet I dare venture the Odds*, He *never will be* an Hero. At leaſt, I greatly fear, he has no Guardian Goddeſs, certainly not the Goddeſs of Wiſdom, to temper and controul his Impetuoſity.

But not wholly to define by Negatives, let us endeavour to give ſome poſitive Image of Eloquence, and her Manners. Truth and Reaſon, Argument and Perſuaſion, go before her in her Progreſs through the Debate. Dignity waits upon her Perſon, and Decency regulates the Ceremonials of her Approach. She ſpeaks, and the Paſſions, with their own reſiſtleſs Spirit and Rapidity, execute her Commands. We either yield perſuaded, or, reſiſting, are overcome. The Man whom ſhe inſpires, hath a Right of Claim to every Honour, that can be paid to Genius, Literature, Abilities, and Virtue; principally to Virtue, for none but a good Man can ever be a perfect Orator. *Oratorem illum*

illum perfectum inſtituimus, qui eſſe niſi vir bonus non poteſt: ideoque non dicendi modo eximiam in eo facultatem, ſed omnes animi virtutes exigimus. QUINTIL.

CAN we then admire, that whole Antiquity, upon theſe hard Terms, never acknowledged more than two Orators; or that Cicero ſhould declare, though he had known many good Speakers, yet he never knew any Man who deſerved the Name of Eloquent? Certainly, therefore, Engliſh Eloquence muſt be of cheaper Purchaſe, ſince we ſo frequently hear Gentlemen complimenting each other upon the Wonders they have performed. But far other Abilities and Powers than thoſe of Eloquence, we ſhould imagine, are to be required in the Man to whom is intruſted the Conduct of a great and powerful Nation. What they are, the Writer of this Paper dares not preſume to determine. But in general, whoever brings with him into this high Office, the Reputation of a late great Employment honourably and honeſtly diſcharged, brings with him a very valuable Pledge for his future Conduct. And, ſurely, he who refuſed this very Employment, the

the apparent Object of our preſent Oppoſition, when offered to him upon Terms which would have tempted a more *willing* Ambition, gives us an inconteſtable Proof of his Integrity.

*EC75.A100.755ob
THE HOUGHTON LIBRARY
13 September 1923

PERHAPS, the firſt great Requiſite in the Character of an able Stateſman, is a ſtrong Diſcernment of the Spirits, and Tempers, and Abilities of Mankind. This Diſcernment, which ariſes from a natural Sagacity, improved by a large Acquaintance with the World and its Manners, is of general Uſe in common Life; but it is abſolutely neceſſary to a Miniſter, who ought to know the very Paſſions of thoſe whom he employs in the Service of the Public. As for Eloquence, let ſuch a Miniſter ſupport a wiſe and honeſt Meaſure, in Language nervous and expreſſive, and flowing with a manly Simplicity; little anxious about the curious Arrangement of Words, and Sentences, and Periods. Let his Elocution and Action be that of a Gentleman; totally unaffected and *untheatrical*; and we then pronounce, that ſuch a Man will have Eloquence enough for all good Purpoſes of his Station; and that whoever would be

ſuppoſed